



THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL VIEWS ON APPLICATION OF THE INTERETHNIC INTEGRATION IN THE TEACHER TRAINING FACULTIES

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2. OVERVIEW OF THEORIES ON MULTICULTURLISM, DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES AND PREVENTION OF STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES

Associate Prof. Trajce Stojanov, PhD

2.1. CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Culture is a dynamic and complex process of construction. Everything we think we are, in fact, “since birth”, “by nature” or that we were “given by God” is a construct of culture. In a social sense, we are constructed beings. None of what we are as social beings was inherited in our genes – our religion, our group or ethnic background, even our language – all this is learned and created through the impact of culture. Thus, to a large extent, we are an “accidental” product of the environment we found ourselves in (fig. 1 is an illustration of some of the factors that determine us). Of course, belonging to this group identity does not determine us completely and unconditionally, however, makes certain behaviors more or less probable.

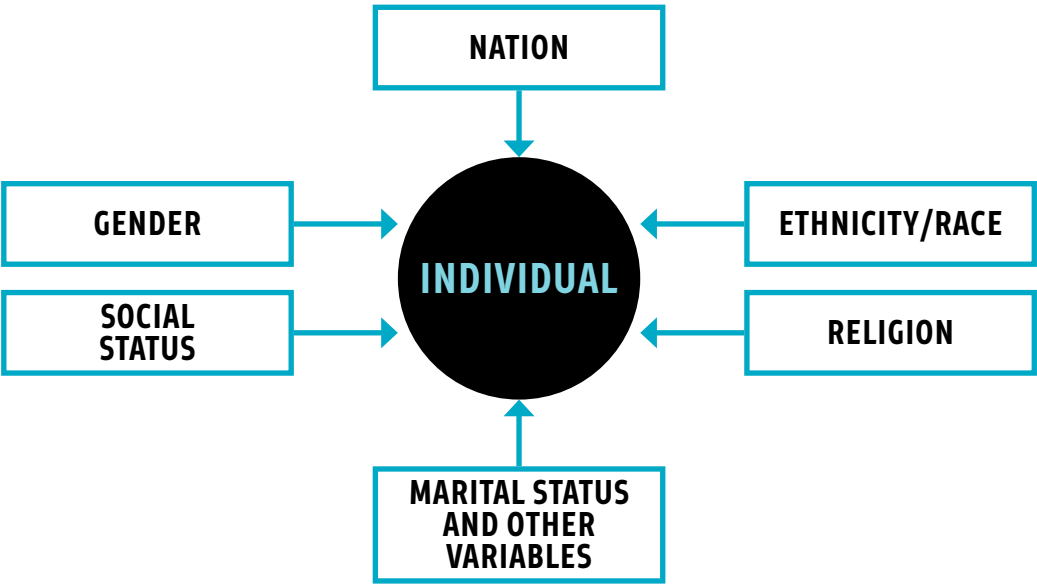


Fig. 1 – Determining factors

The above definition of culture is the most direct and in the strictest sense. If we want to give culture a broader definition, we would simply say that it is a group program for survival and adaptation to the environment⁶. This program consists of knowledge, concepts, values that the community shares through a system of communication. In this sense, culture is comprised of beliefs, symbols and interpretations within the group itself. It is rather a symbolic, notional and

nonmaterial representation of reality, something “through” which you experience, understand and interpret the world. The consequence of this understanding of culture is this: our identity does not develop in isolation; it is the product of culture, history, tradition, media, education, environment, even personal relations and life stories.

If this is the case, then it would be very difficult for us, as a construct, to understand that we are a construct in the first place. We cannot recognize that we have been constructed through that lengthy and unconscious process of cultural impact. It is really difficult to get out of that social identity that

⁶ Bullivant, B. M. (1993). Culture: Its Nature and Meaning for Educators in J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks, *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (2nd ed., pp. 29-47), Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

has been developing for a long time and to grasp our role in society. Thus, this very approach towards identity as a social construct makes it possible to see that all our perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and consequently stereotypes and prejudices, are largely created, forged and imposed through a lengthy process of social and historical fermentation.

The following hypothesis can be drawn from this viewpoint – multiculturalism can be embedded in our identity! This enables a theoretical basis for the concept of interethnic integration in education, which should incorporate multiculturalism in education. It has to become part of our personal and collective identity primarily through the educational process. IIE is the most appropriate way to do this – because it is done through interaction. The central idea that largely guarantees the success of multiculturalism is integration through interaction⁷.

Further, by understanding the concept of multiculturalism as part of personal and collective identity it is made possible for IIE to be an integral part of the entire educational area in the country, because its intent is not only for the students to be exposed to multicultural contents, but for multiculturalism to

become part of their identity. In fact, there is no multiculturalism without a multicultural person! This is necessary both for those who live in relatively homogenous ethnic environments, and for those who live in ethnically heterogeneous areas. We primarily need not only teachers with multicultural competences, but citizens with an adopted multicultural identity. That is why IIE is a concept that needs to be applied on the whole territory of the Republic of Macedonia.

Key for each multicultural education is to re-evaluate this process of formation of our identity. This could be really risky because it requires the involved parties to re-evaluate themselves and their own identities – to re-evaluate something that has been built for a long time and is considered relatively permanent. However, this is the only way that everyone can deal with their own “prejudice”, i.e. to identify and fight your own stereotypes and prejudice. When they do not see their own identity as a social construct, teachers and students:

- ▶ cannot fight their own stereotypes and prejudice;
- ▶ do not feel they are able and powerful to introduce change in themselves and the students;
- ▶ cannot develop sense for the other, for the others' identity;

⁷ An explanation is given further in the text.

- ▶ multiculturalism cannot be introduced as part of each individual's personal identity;
- ▶ cannot recognize themselves as members, "parts" of various social, cultural subgroups simultaneously, and cannot see that although different, they are similar in many ways nevertheless because – although they belong to different ethnic groups – they acquired the same characteristics by participating in the same subgroups;
- ▶ cannot enrich their identity and expand their experiences by treating identity as closed and permanent;
- ▶ limit their self-understanding and self-perception;
- ▶ have distorted self-evaluation, which is the basis for stereotypes and prejudice.

Understanding culture as a "program" and identity as a construct opens up a wide area for implementation of the concept of interethnic integration in education, because a small change, a new variable in that "program" will change the way we experience the world and the people around us. Our behavior can change if a new idea, a new concept, a new representation is introduced in the program or if the old one changes. That it is why all our

efforts are justified in believing that the introduction of multiculturalism through IIE will lead to change in pre-conceptions, overcoming prejudice and improving integration.

2.2. FROM MULTICULTURALISM TO INTERCULTURALISM AND THE NEED FOR INTERETHNIC INTEGRATION IN A MULTICULTURALLY/ MULTIETHNICALLY INTEGRATED SOCIETY

In its broadest, descriptive sense, multiculturalism denotes the same as cultural pluralism, i.e. it indicates variety, multilateralism and cultural diversity in a society. The awareness of the existence of diverse cultures which share the same space became a dominant topic in political philosophy in the last two or three decades.

But in its stricter, normative sense, when we say "multiculturalism" we mean an idea, a theory and practice which should organize that cultural diversity in a way that would equally reflect the identity of all cultures. Multiculturalism, as an idea, is linked to political philosophy that wants to

respond to the diversity in a society. Supporters base this discourse on the belief that individual rights and freedoms are not enough to reflect, protect and promote cultural diversity and that is why a particular corpus of collective rights is necessary to give certain collective rights to various cultural communities in a society. This concept promotes the need for special rights to a particular group or groups, so that they are given the opportunity to express their identity and their demands, i.e. their rights.

Multiculturalism sprouts from several political theories – “identity politics”⁸, “politics of difference”⁹, “politics of recognition”¹⁰ or “group-differentiated rights”¹¹. Without going into detail in each of these theories individually, we can basically reduce them to two sources.

The first comes from the Communitarists¹² and their criticism of liberalism. In fact, the first signs of multiculturalism came precisely in the camp of Communitarists. “Thus, in the beginning the proponents of multiculturalism were drawn into communitarianism as a possible philosophical foundation for minority rights” [...], i.e. “the natural evolution of communitarianism was in some form of multiculturalism”¹³. For Communitarists the collective is before the individual, what is more, the individual is a result, a product of the collective. Thus, for them, the group (the community) is before the individual. In this respect, all social benefits must be accessible to everyone. As Taylor, one of the best known proponents of this theory, says, social benefits are social because of

8 Gutmann, A., 2003, *Identity in Democracy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

9 Young, I.M., 1990, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

10 Taylor, C., 1992, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, A. Gutmann (ed.), Princeton: Princeton University Press

11 Kymlicka, W. 1989, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

12 *Communitarianism* is a political and social philosophy which has the community at the forefront, more precisely – puts the community before the individual. These theories appeared in the 1980s in response to liberalism and libertarianism, although the term communitarianism was coined in 1841 by Goodwin Barmby. Some of the most prominent promoters of this theory are the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, American philosopher Michael Sandel and British philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre.

13 Вил Кимлика, *Современа политичка филозофија*, Академски печат, Скопје, 2009, 361 (Kymlicka, Will, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Akademski pecat, Skopje, 2009, 361)

this, because they belong to everyone. Thus, a group cannot be denied access to the same rights just because of the fact that it is “different”. So “communitarionists see multiculturalism as the appropriate way to protect communities from the devastating effect of individual autonomy”¹⁴.

The second source of multiculturalism is, in fact, within the liberal theories and theoreticians. The best known representative Will Kymlicka says that precisely because of the fundamental values of liberalism – autonomy, freedom and equality of individuals, groups should have greater rights because only by accident they are the minority in a society and cannot be responsible for their situation. He tries to review the liberal idea that individuals are the only ones responsible for their destiny, by wanting to embed into the liberal theories the idea of community. As Kymlicka himself says, “some demands for minority rights strengthen liberal values”¹⁵.

Kymlicka agrees with the liberal theories and claims that we are all responsible for our own actions that build our lives and that our success and happiness depend on them. However, we cannot change certain circumstances nor do we create them ourselves. We

cannot accept inequality just because it derives from the fact that we belong to a minority group, because it is not a result of our decisions and we cannot be responsible for it. That is why these inequalities should be taken into consideration in order to overcome them.

This is briefly the essence of the two standpoints on multiculturalism. In any case, both standpoints affirm the position that culture, i.e. different cultural groups should be the centre of political theory and practice. The state cannot be indifferent to culture and cultural differences. That is precisely why these “group-differentiated rights” (Kymlicka) include exceptions from current practices, so that different groups are able to reflect on their particularities and rights

These exceptions imply various activities: from multilingual ballots for elections, through financing schools for minority languages, to quotas and “positive discrimination” in education, employment in the state institutions, etc. This even means that these “group-differentiated rights” can sometimes directly limit the freedom or the rights of those who are not part of the group, just so the group members are able to protect their culture and realise their rights. With this the concept of multiculturalism becomes practice, materializes, because in this

14 Ibid, pp. 361.

15 Ibid, pp. 367

case this is interculturalism through intercultural integration, which in Macedonia is mostly given the meaning of interethnic.

However, it was quickly realized that multiculturalism is not enough. The concept of multiculturalism was challenged by practice and had to be revised. As with the situation in Macedonia, it showed that the “politics of recognition”, “the group-differentiated rights”, etc. did not succeed in ensuring inclusion of various cultural groups in society, but quite the contrary, they divided society and atomized, segregated and ghettoized communities. Thus the concept of interculturalism was born, which insists on intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding and support.

In this sense, multiculturalism can be considered a “passive”, descriptive concept, which only reflects a certain situation of cultural pluralism, the existence of several cultures in one area, which does not necessarily mean that the situation represents mutual communication between the cultures sharing that space. Multiculturalism is the necessary, starting foundation. Without a clearly defined and adopted concept of multiculturalism, there is no acceptance of similarities or respect for differences. Multiculturalism is, in fact, precisely that – awareness

that cultures have their own characteristics and differences and that is why similarities need to be accepted, and differences respected.

Interculturalism, on the other hand, is a “dynamic” as well as a normative concept, which primarily insists on the need for dialogue and interaction, and cooperation and mutual support between cultures. It presents a program for social action. Thus, interculturalism is a process which strives towards qualitative changes in a multicultural environment. Because the fact of multiculturalism in society is not enough on its own, because tolerance is not enough, since tolerance is a passive principle, it is not enough to just passively accept the fact of society’s multiculturalism – integration is necessary.

However, integration requires interaction! Integration is a result of interaction, while interaction is a precondition for integration. You cannot integrate if you do not communicate. That is why the idea for interethnic integration in education and this publication are conceived and guided by the idea for integration through interaction. Only mutual contacts can integrate communities.

Integration means more than just co-existence of several cultures in one area (that is why the concept of mul-

multiculturalism is no longer sufficient); integration even means more than accepting and respecting differences. Why? Because the first aspect – coexistence – is passive, we do nothing here, we just state the simple fact that several cultures share one space. Cultures will coexist even without us being aware of it. The second aspect – acceptance and respect – is just absence of chauvinism and xenophobia and it also does not have an active component. What should we actively do for acceptance and respect? Nothing, except “to refrain from eliminating the other”! This shows that both aspects do not require our conscious efforts to change the situation and to contribute for interaction and inclusion/integration.

But when coexistence presupposes not only sharing the same space and not only acceptance and respect (tolerance), but mutual cooperation, reliance on each other to ensure mutual existence – then we are talking about intercultural and integration. It is not possible to have an integrated society if individuals from different ethnic and cultural communities have no contact. In this case, there might be apparent peace and order, but it will always, at the foundation, be a potential conflict. Coexistence and tolerance are seeming order, frozen conflict. That is why coexistence is not

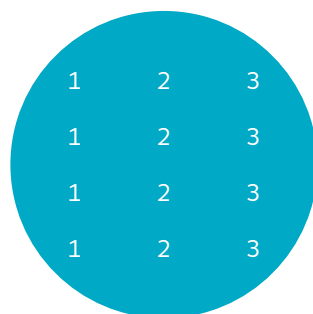
sufficient – a life together is necessary. To summarize, we are speaking about three situations in multicultural relations¹⁶:

1. **SEGREGATION** – when cultures exist in one area, but are completely separated, isolated one from the other.
2. **PARALLELISM** – when cultures exist side by side, without interaction and mutual cooperation.
3. **INTEGRATION** – when there is mutual trust and cooperation between cultures in achieving common existence.

16 Од работниот материјал: Меѓуетничка интеграција во образованието, Обука за тимови за училишна интеграција, Проект за меѓуетничка интеграција во образованието. МЦГО во партнерство со ЦЧПРК, Јуни 2013 (From the working material: Interethnic Integration in Education, Training for School Integration Teams, Interethnic Integration in Education Project. MCEC in cooperation with CHRCR, June 2013)



*Coexistence
with segregation*



*Coexistence
with parallelism*



*Coexistence
with integration*

Fig. 2 – Types of coexistence between cultures

In the first case people are next to each other; in the second they are with each other, only in the third one they are one for the other at the same time. That is the meaning of togetherness – one for each other, because the goal is common, it requires being there for each other, because we cannot live one without the other.

So we can say that the coexistence of several ethnic communities, which do not only share the space but also rely on each other to ensure common existence, is an interethnic integrated society¹⁷.

In Macedonia different ethnic communities show a great level of mutual distance. Empirical research identifies a basic level of cooperation and integration¹⁸. Based on this research, the

17 Од работниот материјал: Меѓуетничка интеграција во образованието, Обука за тимови за училишна интеграција, Проект за меѓуетничка интеграција во образованието. МЦГО во партнерство со ЦЧПРК, Јуни 2013 (From the working material: Interethnic Integration in Education, Training for School Integration Teams, Interethnic Integration in Education Project. MCEC in cooperation with CHRRC, June 2013)

18 Истражувањето на Почетната состојба во врска со меѓуетничката интеграција во образованието спроведено во 2102 година: http://mk.pmio.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/IIEP-BASELINE-STUDY_MAC.pdf. (Baseline Study of the Interethnic Integration in Education

following conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between different ethnic communities:

- ▶ Macedonians and Albanians live in parallel – side by side;
- ▶ Roma are equally distanced both from Macedonians and Albanians;
- ▶ Serbs “mix” with the Macedonians, but are distanced from the Albanians;
- ▶ Turks “mix” mostly with the Albanians, but are somewhat distanced towards the Macedonians.

In all these situations we can see that the communities are either side by side, segregated and isolated, or in the best case scenario, they live in parallel; in none of these cases the communities live “one for the other”, there are no cases of coexistence with integration. We believe that this situation can be changed only through education.

We can freely say that this situation is largely a result of the education, which “produces” such tendencies. Namely, in multilingual schools in Macedonia, the majority of students are split according to the teaching language – they either go to different shifts or to different parts of the schools, sometimes even in different buildings.

While in monolingual schools the students who belong to one community have no opportunity to be in contact with and to communicate with students with a different language from a different community. Finally, in all schools the majority of students are burdened with ethnic stereotypes and prejudice¹⁹.

This is the situation that we want to change – to work on creating an integrated society. This change needs to occur in education; that is why we think that the idea for interethnic integration in education is the key. One of the most prominent theoreticians C. Taylor, already mentioned previously, in his study “The Politics of Recognition”, when talking about “recognition” of the values of different cultures and identities, immediately points out to schools as the place where this recognition becomes operational²⁰. The school with the curricula (visible and hidden) as well as with the whole pedagogic practice should imply, reflect and promote diversity. In this sense – *intercultural competences* can be developed only in education along with sensitivity for the other, as well as building the personality along the

conducted in 2012: http://mk.pmio.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/IIEP-BASELINE-STUDY_MAC.pdf

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Taylor, C., 1992, „The Politics of Recognition“, in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, A. Gutmann (ed.), Princeton: Princeton University Press

principles of democracy, *equality and human rights*. We need schools that will promote and advance interethnic interaction, because *only persons who come out of such schools will promote integration in society*.

2.3. INTERETHNIC INTEGRATION IN EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

In this respect, interethnic integration in education is mainly an idea, but also a reform, thus a process, with the main aim of changing the structure of education and educational institutions. This process should result in the following – everything that is part of the education process, all the materials, curricula and syllabi, as well as all behaviors and attitudes of those involved in the process should change in a way that will instigate educational equality and inclusion of all diversity.

Even beyond – interethnic integration in education should ensure contact and interaction of all ethnic communities, based on common goals and activities. That is why interethnically integrated education is a reform pro-

cess, it presupposes change to all variables, not only the curriculum, the content or the syllabus. Thus, interethnic integration in education is not just a reform, but in a certain sense, an ideal towards which we should always strive, and as such it is a serious challenge for everyone involved in the education process – *teachers, head teachers, parents, students and the wider community*. This is a challenge for everyone and it is worthy of our efforts.

Interethnic integration in education is so important for another very important aspect, namely, because in a way it is directed at the adoption of particular social skills and knowledge, unlike the strictly academic ones, which schools traditionally insist on. Schools, in principle, are structured to underline the development of academic, scientific knowledge and skills, i.e. the basic skills of reading, writing or numeracy. Even testing is oriented only towards these basic academic skills – social skills are rarely tested – which takes the student further from a broader, liberal education which is necessary for efficient survival in a multicultural world. Students, of course, need numerical, reading and writing skills, as well as academic knowledge. However, they also need knowledge, skills and values that will make it possible for them to live, communicate and make decisions with fellow citizens from

different ethnic, religious or language groups. That is why multicultural education is in fact *education for socialization*. Through it they are sensitized about what is generally called *social justice*, thus having the potential to be *active and participating citizens, which is the foundation of liberal democracy*. There is no democracy without individuals with democratic capacities.

As a matter of fact, the greatest problems today, both in the world and in our country, are most probably not the result of the fact that people cannot read and write, but of the fact that members of different communities, ethnic groups and religions cannot cooperate to solve common problems. It is probable that when all ethnic groups in the country join their efforts for common goals and work in mutual harmony and agreement, many of the common problems would be solved much easier. This is why interethnic integration in education is important. Once again – we should not think that interethnic integration in education means only change in the syllabi, curricula and introduction of content from other cultures. This is not enough. Actually, this is the simplified and inadequate understanding of the concept.

As multiculturalism evolved into interculturalism and intercultural integra-

tion, so multicultural education is not just imparting knowledge about concepts, nor acquiring adequate competences – it is more than that – it is the place where cultures meet! Education, especially in the concept promoted in this publication, is a place for integration. At school we need to meet the *other*. We can be as bold as to say that *interethnic integration in education for Macedonia becomes conditio sine qua non for the survival of the concept of multiculturalism!* No multiculturalism can survive without integration. As we already said, multiculturalism is not just coexistence, the existence of different communities side by side; multiculturalism is not even just the acceptance and recognition of different cultures. Multiculturalism is a synergy, mutual understanding and cooperation in ensuring common existence and future. This can be provided only in interethnically integrated education where – not side by side, not one with the other – but one for the other they work together in the common space they share for the common goals that connect them, for the common future they are expecting. That common future requires that work be done today.

Only in such a case we are talking about interculturalism, which in this case is ensured through the concept of interethnically integrated education. That is why we say that multicultural

education is not enough. This is because it means only exposing all students to contents from the cultures of *others*, which achieves a certain level of respect for the *other*, but contact is missing here, which is key for deeper interethnic relations and mutual life. Multicultural education is not enough – it is time to go to a higher level.

Interethnic integration in education in the Republic of Macedonia means, first of all, contact between the members of different cultural/ethnic/language groups. In order to ensure this contact it is necessary to plan and organize joint student activities, both curricular and extracurricular. Once again – the accent is on joint activities of members of different cultural/ethnic/language groups. It is not so important what that joint activity is, but the fact that it is done together. That is why it is important for the activity to be of common interest for all involved in the process. In this sense, the product of the joint activity is not the only important thing, but the process of arriving to the product is too. This is the only way for the students participating in the joint process to have direct communication and to learn from each other, to learn to interact. All of this will lead to a decrease in prejudice and stereotypes, the level of cooperation will increase and relations of codependence will de-

velop. This mutual acquaintance and communication will inevitably lead to interpersonal relations. This is the ultimate goal of the entire process. The process of interethnic communication must be raised to interpersonal level because every communication is, in fact, a dialogue between persons.

Research shows that the situation so far²¹, is that interethnic communication is mainly inter-group. What does this mean? This means that we communicate with the *other* from the position of our community and with some *other*, someone “different” from us. In this communication there is a clear division between You and Us! There is no dialogue here, because dialogue presupposes persons, there are not persons, no individual, human contact. .

When there is such division, the ethnic group exerts strong pressure on the individual not to leave the group and s/he is forced to think and act the same, otherwise they will be “traitors”. That is why this situation

21 Истражувањето на Почетната состојба во врска со меѓуетничката интеграција во образованието спроведено 2012 година: http://mk.pmio.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/IIEP-BASELINE-STUDY_MAC.pdf. (Baseline Study of the Interethnic Integration in Education conducted in 2012: http://mk.pmio.mk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/IIEP-BASELINE-STUDY_MAC.pdf.)

also brings distinct stereotypes and prejudice about *the other*, *the other community*, where normally you have a high, positive opinion of yourself and a low, negative opinion about the *other*. The main source of stereotypes and prejudice is the inability to leave your own group and communicate man to man, person to person. Stereotypes mean inability to rise above ourselves and take a look beyond ourselves.

The goal of the *interethnically integrated education* is to raise interethnic communication from inter-group to the level of interpersonal! In this type there is communication between persons, not groups and ethnicities. They converse about topics of common interest, independent of their background. In this communication we either agree or disagree with our interlocutor not because we are “different”, but because of the topic of discussion, which is common. What would be the role of our ethnic, cultural or language background if we talk about a topic of common interest? Minimal, almost nonexistent, because in interpersonal communication we do not pay attention to ethnicity, but to personality. In such communication we do not want to insult or hurt each other primarily as individuals, and then as members of a certain community. In interpersonal communication we do not become friends because of our ethnic or cul-

tural background, but because of our personality which is conversing with another person.

Thus, one of the key goals of interethnic integration in education is ensuring interethnic communication at interpersonal level, because only this can lead to an integrated society. An integrated society means opportunity for each citizen to nourish and preserve their identity, as well as to develop and preserve the common identity, i.e. the feeling of belonging to the Republic of Macedonia²². The concept of interethnic communication in education will introduce changes in the education system that would ultimately change society. Otherwise, the tendency of segregation and mutual distancing of ethnic communities will continue. .

How can schools, specifically, promote this interethnic interaction? First, all stakeholders in the education process need to be familiarized with the meaning of interethnic integration. All stakeholders in the education process

22 Од работниот материјал: Меѓуетничка интеграција во образованието, Обука за тимови за училишна интеграција, Проект за меѓуетничка интеграција во образованието. МЦГО во партнерство со ЦЧПРК, јуни 2013 (From the working material: Interethnic Integration in Education, Training for School Integration Teams, Interethnic Integration in Education Project. MCEC in cooperation with CHRRCR, June 2013))

– teachers, students, parents, head teachers, support and technical staff, as well as the community at large – have to understand that there is a problem, as well as a solution. Without admitting to the fact that ethnic communities in the Republic of Macedonia live in parallel worlds, which is not good, we will not start working on changing the situation.

After we “admit” this, each school should start developing a general policy that would enable planning and implementing activities for interethnic integration, designed in accordance with the character of the school. A general course has to be chosen that would demonstrate the school’s willingness to continually and in the long-term work on interethnic integration. This policy should engage all stakeholders in the education process: teachers, children, parents and the municipality, and to make their activities operational with a concrete plan.

So, on the basis of this general approach, a concrete plan should be developed for common activities of the students. Without planning the common activities there is no successful implementation. Once again, it should be taken into consideration that the common activities should be sufficiently interesting for the students and to stem from their interests, so that they can be motivated and en-

gaged in the long run. That is why it is important to include all students in the planning of activities. This, on the other hand, requires a high level of democracy in the school. The school has to function in an atmosphere of common decision making, that would create the feeling of common belonging and common contribution, which is the key for success

The concrete plan needs to be turned into concrete activities, which could be curricular and extracurricular activities. Curricular activities can be done during class and by their nature they are amenable to common interethnic activities, such as music and art lessons, foreign language lessons, physical and healthcare education. Also, curricular activities can be implemented through various common projects as part of regular subjects, during classes in nature, exchange of teachers, materials, etc. As part of extracurricular activities, there is a broad range of activities that are geared towards interethnic integration: excursions, daytrips, visits, joint celebrations and events, parties and other fun and social activities, sports, but also activities related to common and general issues, such as environmental actions, humanitarian and community activities, as well as activities in various clubs – drama, art, choir, etc.

In any case, whatever the activities – curricular or extracurricular, short-term or long-term – attention should be paid to the following criteria in order for the activity to be considered common and interethnic:

- ▶ the group of students should be balanced according to ethnicity, age, gender and other parameters important for the activity;
- ▶ the activity should be implemented by teachers from the involved members of the ethnic, language group;
- ▶ participants from different communities should be treated equally and impartially by those in charge of implementing the activity;
- ▶ all languages used in teaching should be used as equally as possible;
- ▶ the topics/activities should be chosen jointly by all represented communities;
- ▶ the goals should always be concrete, tangible and the results should be the product of the common activity of all communities;
- ▶ regular meetings should be held to enable a higher level of interpersonal communication;
- ▶ the work should be done in an atmosphere of cooperation, and if there is a competition, it should be in “mixed” groups of students.

At the end of the education process, the “product” should be students with intercultural competences, aware of the differences and ready to live and work in a multicultural environment. In this context, the education process should generate:

- **MULTICULTURALISM:** knowing your own culture as well as the specific features, values and practices of other cultures (knowing what Christmas means in your culture, as well as Kurban Bayram in the culture of the other and vice versa);
- **RESPECTING DIFFERENCES:** accepting cultural/ethnic differences and refraining from labeling (understanding that wearing a “headscarf” is part of the cultural/ethnic tradition and in no case means “evil”);
- **MULTIPERSPECTIVE:** understanding the opinions and feelings of others and the ability to look at things from the others’ perspective (understanding the others’ perspective that they not want to be called “Shqiptar” or “Slav Macedonian”, or “infidel”);
- **REDUCING PREJUDICE AND STEREOTYPES:** this is an opportunity to surpass your own perspective.

This is the only way that leads to:

- **TRUST:** building mutual trust (only with an elementary level of trust and without prejudice I can implement a common activity with the *other*, otherwise that “burden” will encumber every communication);
- **DEMOCRATIC CAPACITY:** all the above mentioned gains will ultimately lead towards building the democratic capacity of every individual so that in the future they can be an active factor in common policies and be involved in the decision-making process of the wider community (only as “highly aware” and active citizen I am part of the democratic community).

We should bear in mind that children come to school, but they leave as citizens of society, who transfer their knowledge and social skills as well as prejudice and stereotypes to their municipality, at the workplace and affect their broader environment. That is why we believe that the concept of interethnically integrated education will greatly contribute for a better society, a society based on trust and co-operation, not on divisions and hatred.

